

Washington, DC – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed bipartisan legislation that reduces the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine offenses.

Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Milwaukee) said, **“In the 1980s, Congress passed a drug enforcement law that focused on the particular type of substance, not the action itself. That was misguided and created a 100 to one sentencing disparity that disproportionately impacted African American communities across the country. This disparity is unjust and unjustified. I’m glad that Congress acted in a bipartisan way to fix it.”**

The 1986 law triggered five year minimum sentences for possession of five grams of crack cocaine and 500 grams for powder cocaine. The House-passed bill reduces that disparity, requiring a five year minimum sentence for 28 grams of crack cocaine.

Last year about 1,500 people were convicted for crack cocaine possession of somewhere between five and 25 grams, and near 80 percent of those convicted are black.

The legislation, which now goes to President Obama for his signature, also strengthens penalties for major offenses such as drug trafficking and targeting children.

The legislation is supported by many law enforcement and civil rights organizations, including: National District Attorneys Association, National Association of Police Organizations, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the American Bar Association, NAACP and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

###